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Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Forty-eighth session

Summary record (partial)* of the 14th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 8 May 2012, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Pillay

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports

(a) Reports submitted by States parties in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant *(continued)*

Fifth periodic report of Spain (continued) (E/C.12/ESP/5; E/C.12/ESP/Q/5 and Add.1; HRI/CORE/ESP/2010)

Articles 10 to 12 (continued)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Spain took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Abdel-Moneim** asked the delegation for more details as to how the consumer price index had changed over the reporting period and whether it was linked to the wage scale. He also wished to receive information on the size of the tax burden relative to income, whether fiscal policy was used to address income inequalities and what measures the State party was taking to combat tax evasion.

3. **Mr. Texier** said that he wished to know more about the situation of the homeless in Spain and measures taken to assist them. The construction boom had been one of the main causes of the economic crisis in Spain and had left in its wake a large number of vacant or unfinished houses. He wondered what solution had been devised to the problem and whether there were plans to use such houses for the homeless or persons without adequate housing.

4. **Mr. Kedzia** expressed surprise that, during the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), Spain had rejected three recommendations on human trafficking: to draw up a national plan to combat violence against women and girls; establish a mechanism guaranteeing the correct identification of trafficking victims; and take necessary measures to ensure that foreign women who were victims of trafficking had access to the asylum procedure. He asked the delegation to explain why those recommendations had been rejected.

5. **Mr. Marchán Romero** (Country Rapporteur) said that the State party had a number of separate plans to combat poverty and social exclusion as opposed to a comprehensive policy. It would be timely to devise a plan that filled any gaps and contained effective measures to target specific issues relating to economic, social and cultural rights which had been affected by the economic crisis.

6. He commended the State party for the adoption of Royal Decree No. 6/2012 on urgent measures to protect mortgage holders without resources. However, that positive development was undermined by the strict conditions in the Decree with regard to a debtor's unemployment status and the price of his or her house as well as by the provisions of Act No. 19/2009, commonly known as the "express eviction law". He asked whether it would be feasible to extend the Decree to benefit more people affected by the crisis, and to provide compensation for persons adversely affected by that Act.

7. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, asked what measures the State party intended to take to address the shortage of social housing, in particular for marginalized persons. In addition, he wished to know the delegation's views on claims by civil society sources that there was no legislation governing forced eviction. Finally, homelessness had not been officially defined in legislation and he asked whether studies had investigated the causes and main victims of the rise in homelessness. Might the increase be linked to forced evictions and the lack of social housing? Those problems had

been raised in the Committee's 2004 concluding observations and had probably been exacerbated by recent austerity measures.

8. **Mr. Coria** (Spain) said that holding centres for foreigners were subject to new legal provisions and the management of the centres had been brought into line with the Ombudsman's recommendations. The centres had two areas of management: security was under the responsibility of the National Police Force, and specialized assistance staff external to the security forces developed initiatives to improve the welfare and health of detainees. The names of the centres were also due to be changed to Centres for Hosting Foreigners under Monitored Conditions to reflect their purpose more accurately. The 2009 Aliens Act had already improved judicial oversight of the centres by assigning a judge for the purpose and listing inmates' rights, including the right to contact and be visited by non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

9. He emphasized that the average length of stay in such centres, at only 18 days, was relatively low compared to other European countries and considerably less than the upper limit of 60 days. The cases of two deaths at centres in Madrid and Barcelona were under judicial investigation by examining magistrates, but he stressed that at the time of death, both centres had had trained doctors and nurses on site. All previous complaints of ill-treatment which had been lodged had been dismissed after appropriate investigations had been carried out.

10. **Ms. Le Bolay** (Spain) said that, even though Spain had not ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the majority of the provisions set out in that instrument were reflected in Spanish law.

11. The Government's actions in regard to the provision of health care to foreigners had often been misconstrued by the media. Legislation redefining foreigners' rights to health care was currently under consideration by Parliament. The new legislation specifically governed fraud committed by European Union (EU) citizens who received treatment in another country after a period of residency in Spain and yet whose bill was sent to the Spanish Government. The error had stemmed from an overly flexible transposition of EU law into Spanish domestic law. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights had confirmed in 2009 that undocumented foreigners were entitled to health care only in emergencies. The new legislation would not alter the access to health-care services of undocumented foreigners, nor of foreigners residing in Spain and certain vulnerable categories of person. A report by the Auditing Court found that in 2009 alone, Spain had sent health-care bills to other countries for over 700,000 persons on such grounds.

12. **Mr. Salama Salama** (Spain) said that prison legislation recognized three levels of penitentiary regimes according to the danger posed by detainees and their level of social integration. On entering prison, detainees were assessed by a technical team and evaluation board whose report would serve as a basis for the decision on the detainee's regime level to be taken by the prison management. Those decisions by the penitentiary facilities were subject to review by the Prison Inspection Judge at the request of detainees themselves or the Office of the Public Prosecutor. It was possible to lodge an appeal in the ordinary courts against a decision by the Prison Inspection Judge, and appeals could even reach the Constitutional Court in the event of a violation of fundamental rights. The first-level penitentiary regime, intended for high-risk prisoners, was applied in a closed prison under special penitentiary conditions; the second level was subject to normal prison conditions; and the third level was a semi-open regime under which detainees left the correctional facility to work during the day and returned at night.

13. As for whether there had been consultations with organizations over the 2012 Health Act, under the Constitution it was permissible in emergency situations for an Act to be put

before the plenary of the Chamber of Deputies and approved or rejected within 30 days. The session concerned was scheduled to take place on 17 May and political parties would be able to propose amendments. Thus, given the urgency of the matter, no organizations had been consulted.

14. **Ms. Fernández de la Hoz** (Spain) said prison authorities were aware that the only right to be taken away from prisoners was the right to freedom and that they were entitled to the same level of health care as the rest of the population. All but the smallest prisons had trained doctors and nurses on duty 24 hours a day. When in need of specialist care, detainees left prison and were taken to national hospitals. Several health programmes had been launched in prisons, including in the areas of vaccination, HIV/AIDS awareness, reduction of drug abuse and mental health. The mental health programmes had contributed to a steady decrease in suicide among inmates since 2007. Finally, technology used in prisons to reduce damage had prompted visits from a number of foreign representatives.

15. In accordance with the Abortion Act, abortion services were normally dispensed free of charge in all Autonomous Communities until the fourteenth week of pregnancy, and exceptionally until the twenty-second week on presentation of a medical report certifying problems for the mother or baby. Besides regional centres and private hospitals, the services were offered by private State-approved clinics and, to her knowledge, the clinics had not overstepped the abortion time limits. A clinic in the Aragon region had suspended its abortion services owing to a dispute over pay, but it had since requested a new licence.

16. Binge drinking in Spain had started to follow the patterns of Nordic rather than Mediterranean countries, as young people were drinking large amounts of alcohol in short periods of time – a phenomenon called *botellón*. Consequently, although alcohol consumption was decreasing in general, it was on the rise among young people. Measures to combat the trend included: limiting the legal age for purchasing alcohol to 18 in almost all regions; clamping down on alcohol consumption in the streets; granting police powers to break up each *botellón*; training professionals to check for categories of youths at risk of drinking heavily; and concluding agreements between civil society organizations and local governments to combat the phenomenon. Despite the best efforts of the authorities, she admitted that little headway had been made to curb the trend.

17. The 2006 Mental Health Strategy was now being applied in 17 Autonomous Communities, and the results of a 2010 evaluation of its effectiveness could be consulted on the website of the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality.

18. Royal Decree No. 16/2012 focused on making the health-care system more efficient, without compromising quality or making cuts. It aimed at achieving gains in the quality and range of services; improving equality and access rights; integrating primary and specialized care; achieving a more sustainable system; and cooperating with the EU on residential health care. Spain was one of only four EU countries in which almost all health services were paid for entirely by the State. Areas for efficiency gains included: centralized purchasing; greater use of generics; the creation of a registry of medical staff to ensure appropriate personnel transfer within the National Health Service; and enhanced information exchange to avoid duplication of data and repeated consultations.

19. She said that very few areas of the health-care system were privatized and that citizens would never have to pay for their health-care system. Where privatization had occurred, it was largely at management level and occasionally at the local level, such as following the imposition of the *céntimo sanitario* petrol tax to support health expenditure.

20. **Ms. Ruiz** (Spain) said that the specific policy towards the Roma had changed from one of social assistance to include a broader consideration of their fundamental rights, social welfare and general social participation. The State Council of the Roma, created in 2005, and the Roma Cultural Institute, in 2007, worked with NGOs to change the image

and stereotypes of gypsies. Funding had been provided since 2005 for a regular Romany publication; a publication, founded in 1995, by journalists combating racism by analysing information and news on Roma; and practical guidelines and recommendations for the media to improve the objective portrayal of the Roma population. The Strategy for the Social Inclusion of the Roma 2012–2020 had also recently been approved by the Cabinet and was comprehensive in its coverage of Roma issues, including sections on equal treatment and improving the image of the Roma. Its aim was to counter stereotypes about the Roma with real data, for example on the number of hours worked.

21. In terms of health care, the National Strategy for Equity in Health 2004–2008 had previously promoted cooperation between Ministry of Health experts and the Roma population to ensure that the latter received the same coverage as Spanish citizens. Nevertheless, a 2006 comparative health-care study indicated that there were discrepancies between the health care of the Roma and that of the general population not only at the level of services, but also in terms of their perception of their health status. The section on health of the Strategy for the Social Inclusion of the Roma 2012–2020 collated data to shed light on other comparative disparities in the area of health so that the Government could identify which areas required further efforts.

22. Referring to the Dependency Act, she said that cuts were not substantial because the Act was viewed as a priority area by the Government and benefited over 900,000 persons. That being said, of the three levels covered by the Act (moderate, severe and major), the moderate dependency entitlement was due to be postponed until 2013.

23. The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2008–2010 had been Spain's previous principal programme for social inclusion. Current programmes in the area were to be brought in line with the social exclusion strategy of the EU, under which each country should organize a national plan covering the period until 2020. The State party was concentrating on five social inclusion projects built around the general welfare plans of the EU and with a focus on three aspects: active inclusion of the population; inclusion in the labour force, in part through tax subsidies; and universal coverage of social and health services on the basis of greater coordination between health service and social service bodies.

24. **Ms. Peñafiel** (Spain) said that the Act against Gender Violence was a good model for legislation on the subject. She wondered how best to assess it – in terms of the number of victims, comparisons with other countries, the number of complaints made by victims or the amount of information made available to the public. The Act represented a cross-cutting approach to gender violence and applied a range of measures in many sectors. One such aspect was the provision of subsidies to women unable to join the workforce following domestic violence of a physical or psychological nature.

25. Some of the most important measures of the Act aimed at increasing public awareness of domestic violence. In addition, a number of bodies were required to publish relevant reports, including the Observatorio de Violencia (Violence Observatory), the State Schools Council and the national health system. The very act of reporting on the issues could generate bad press for the Act, but there were few countries boasting such up-to-date and thorough data through the cross-cutting coordination of bodies.

26. She said that in Spain there was no discrimination against foreign women who were victims of violence. The Interregional Health Council had adapted the General Health Guidelines to take into account the particular situation of immigrant women, in two different situations: foreign women who had arrived in Spain to rejoin their families could obtain permission to live and work in Spain once granted a protection order or if the Office of the Public Prosecutor issued a report indicating sufficient evidence of gender violence. Both cases were considered as priorities by the courts. For undocumented women, once

they had received one of those two instruments, their provisional permission became definite and any other proceedings in which they might be involved were suspended.

27. She confirmed that under the Equality Act, foreign women who were victims of gender violence could gain the right to asylum.

28. Remarking that domestic violence was not a problem confined to Spain, she said that the State party supported combating femicide and violence against women at various international forums. It was playing a key role, in cooperation with civil society, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, in the creation of guidelines for investigations into sexual violence and femicide. Spain had also been active in highlighting the issue at the Latin America and Caribbean-European Union Summit and the Organization of American States. Enabling victims to speak out and making sure that the item was in the public eye and high on the political agenda were already considerable achievements.

29. In response to Mr. Kedzia's question, she said that her country had rejected the recommendations on human trafficking made during the UPR as Spain did not endorse the personal identification of trafficking victims.

30. **Mr. Sola** (Spain) said that there was no scientific evidence of a link between the economic downturn and increased drug dependency and alcoholism. Moreover, a 2007 survey had found that 35 per cent of homeless persons in Spain had never used drugs. However, the possibility of a link had not been ruled out and Spain was participating in research led by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction in order to ascertain whether or not there was a correlation.

31. The Royal Decree establishing the basic care package available to drug users under the national health system advocated a two-pronged biopsychosocial model based on controlling demand through prevention, support and social reintegration programmes and controlling supply through coordinated action by the national and regional police forces, the judiciary, the customs authorities and the special prosecution office for the prevention and repression of the illegal drug trade.

32. **Ms. Badía Gamarra** (Spain) said that the main Government initiative to assist the thousands of Spanish mortgage borrowers struggling to meet their repayment obligations was Royal Decree No. 6/2012, of 9 March, which had introduced a code of good practice that had been accepted by all Spanish mortgage lenders by resolution dated 10 April 2012. Since the Decree was a very recent legislative initiative, adopted by lenders only a month previously, the delegation was not able to provide the Committee with data regarding its impact, but it undertook to do so in due course.

33. The action plan for borrowers in arrears introduced by the Royal Decree consisted of three stages. In the first stage, borrowers would be offered a debt restructuring package incorporating a grace period, a reduced rate of interest and extension of the overall repayment period. In the second stage, borrowers still unable to meet their obligations might be offered a reduction in the value of the outstanding loan. If neither of the first two solutions proved viable, in the third stage debtors had the option of surrendering their home in full and final settlement of the debt and renting it back from the lender at an affordable rent for a period of two years.

34. Royal Decree No. 6/2012 also provided that, to help them to meet the rent due in application of the third stage of the process, all persons who might otherwise have been evicted from their home as a result of foreclosure would be eligible for State housing benefit under the 2009–2012 State Housing and Upgrading Plan. Under that Plan, housing

benefit up to a value of 40 per cent of the annual rent, subject to a ceiling of €3,200 per home per year, could be paid for a maximum period of two years.

35. The Plan also provided for the development of new forms of protected housing as a solution for short- and long-term situations of homelessness. Vulnerable groups, which were non-exhaustively defined as low-income families, victims of domestic violence, terrorism and natural disasters, persons aged over 75, persons caring for dependants, persons made homeless in slum clearances and other persons at risk of social exclusion, would have priority access and could be granted tenancies of up to 25 years. The new developments could be either publicly or privately managed provided that the entire building was allocated to subsidized housing and social, zoning and building requirements were met. Those requirements established, inter alia, that living space per person should be no less than 15 m² and no more than 45 m², that larger family units offering living space of more than 90 m² should account for no more than 25 per cent of the development and that common service areas should occupy no more than 30 per cent of the total habitable area. The Plan sought to ensure that strict transparency, disclosure and competitiveness criteria were applied in all new social housing developments.

36. With regard to forced evictions, section 132 of the Spanish Constitution established that all public land was inalienable and exempt from attachment. In application of that principle, as well as to comply with regulations outlawing overcrowding and squatting and to prevent adverse health consequences, the authorities were under a legal obligation to take action to remove irregular settlements and illegal constructions. However, when such action was required, the Government took all necessary measures to protect the economic, social and cultural rights of the persons affected. As irregular settlements were sometimes hubs for trafficking in human beings, child abuse, drug dependency and crime, eviction proceedings were usually closely monitored by social workers and every effort was made to ensure that those made homeless were placed in appropriate but affordable housing and received support for their reintegration. In short, housing policy prioritized urban and housing stock regeneration and renting as the solutions to the current reality and was designed to ensure that all Spaniards, particularly the most vulnerable, enjoyed the right to decent and adequate housing.

37. **Mr. Salama Salama** (Spain) said that the wage adjustment for 2011 had been 2.8 per cent, while inflation had been just 0.4 per cent. Government measures for combating fraud and corruption were set forth in the bill on measures to prevent and combat tax fraud that had been approved by Parliament earlier in the year. Under Spanish civil law, cases of eviction for non-payment of rent were heard before a judge who, after hearing both sides, issued a written ruling with which both parties were required to comply. Thus, all eviction proceedings were subject to the fullest possible judicial and procedural safeguards.

38. **Mr. Hermida Marina** (Spain) said that Spain had ratified the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training and had been one of only a few countries that had actively contributed to the Plan of Action for human rights education developed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The 2006 General Education Act expressly established that human rights and citizenship education should be a component of the compulsory education curriculum for 6- to 16-year-olds; thus, the full spectrum of human rights, as recognized in the Constitution, was taught in schools.

39. **Ms. Shin Heisoo**, commending the State party's pioneering efforts to monitor and understand gender-based violence, suggested that it might look to Nordic countries for useful examples of good practice.

40. **Mr. Marchán Romero** asked whether Spanish law contained a definition of homeless persons and, if so, whether that definition included only persons without a roof over their head or also embraced persons without a habitual place of residence of their own.

He would also like to know how that definition shaped housing policy. He further enquired whether the State party intended to develop a holistic plan to combat poverty and social exclusion that reflected the impact of the economic crisis and would follow up on the plan that had come to an end in 2010.

41. **Ms. Fernández de la Hoz** (Spain) said that the Spanish authorities had adopted the categories of homelessness (rooflessness, houselessness and living in insecure or inadequate housing) established in the European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion but that persons in the first category were prioritized for working purposes and homelessness statistics covered only persons in that group. However, the social services authorities were working with the National Statistics Institute to try to quantify the number of persons living in shelters or detention centres with a view to establishing whether or not they too should be classified as homeless. A working group was also in place to consider the implications of such a change.

42. A new social inclusion plan following up on the plan that had terminated in 2010 had been drafted in 2011 and was currently being refined and finalized by the new Government. The aim was to ensure a three-stranded strategy that incorporated access to employment, income security and access to quality services.

Articles 13 to 15

43. **Ms. Cong Jun** said the measures that the State party had adopted to tackle the high school failure rate of Roma students gave her the impression that the aim was to find alternative, segregated forms of education for those students rather than to integrate them more effectively in the mainstream system. She would appreciate the delegation's comments on that observation.

44. **Mr. Marchán Romero** said that, at twice the European average, the early school dropout rate in Spain remained unacceptably high despite the recent decline. He asked what further action the State party envisaged to redress that situation and whether the economic crisis might have been a factor in the decline. Noting that economic, social and cultural rights were sometimes considered a lesser priority and accorded less attention in times of crisis, he urged the State party to avoid that error and asked how it intended to ensure that expenditure was maintained at both the central and regional levels.

45. Lastly, citing paragraph 681 of the report, he expressed concern that a right as fundamental as the right to take part in cultural life should not be constitutionally protected. In his view, precisely because of the breadth of benefits and services arising from the concept of culture, that right should be defined and recognized at the constitutional level. He suggested that, as a minimum, central Government should draw up guidelines for the Autonomous Communities that expressly defined the minimum elements that respect for cultural rights entailed.

46. **Mr. Abdel-Moneim** asked whether the delegation could provide a breakdown of the cost of education and how that cost had evolved during the reporting period. Figures showing educational expenditure as a percentage of total Government spending and gross domestic product throughout the reporting period would also be appreciated.

47. **Mr. Salama Salama** (Spain) said that the right to take part in cultural life was recognized at the constitutional level indirectly as a guiding principle of social and economic policy and that all public powers, including the judiciary and the legislature, were constitutionally bound to protect that right even though it could not be invoked directly in court. Section 149 of the Constitution expressly established the State's duty to promote and preserve culture and assigned to the State exclusive competence for guaranteeing fulfilment of that constitutional duty.

48. **Mr. Gentil Álvarez Ossorio** (Spain) said that the early school dropout rate in Spain had been around 30 per cent since 2005. However, an incipient decline was apparent and the aim was to reduce the rate to 23 per cent by 2015 and 15 per cent by 2020. The economic crisis was not thought to be a factor in the decline, which was attributed principally to the various Government measures adopted. Since most of those measures had been introduced only recently and were medium- to long-term in their scope, it was not yet possible to accurately gauge their efficacy, but the early signs were that the targets should be achieved.

49. Foremost among the measures was the Plan Proa guidance and support programme, launched in the 2005/06 academic year, which sought to meet the social and cultural needs of struggling students through in-school support. Over 700 educational institutions had participated in the scheme in the 2010/11 academic year and, despite the austerity measures, funding levels had been maintained for the current year.

50. The Plan Proa had been supplemented by the initial vocational qualification programmes introduced in the 2007/08 academic year as a means to keep struggling students in education and prepare them for future work. Around 80,000 places were available on that programme each year. In addition, an 80 per cent increase in funding for Government grant programmes since 2004 had allowed for the introduction, in 2009, of maintenance grants for students from low-income backgrounds who followed an initial vocational qualification programme and, in 2010, wage grants to enable those students to continue their vocational training in tertiary education institutions.

51. The measures in place also allowed for young people who had not completed their basic education to return to school and obtain a qualification and, in the past academic year, funding of €45 million had been assigned to that programme. Lastly, recognizing the importance of early childhood education to future success at school, in 2008 the Government had launched the Plan Educa 3 for the under-3s. A total of 49,000 places had so far been made available under that scheme and funding had been €1,087 million.

52. **Mr. Sola** (Spain) said that, in addition to the constitutional guarantees of cultural rights referred to earlier by Mr. Salama Salama, there were a number of programmes and strategies in place to guarantee the right to participate in cultural life of persons most likely to experience difficulties in that area. For example, in 2011 the Government had launched a comprehensive strategy for guaranteeing access to culture for all, including persons with disabilities, in fulfilment of its obligations under article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Central aims of that strategy were to guarantee universal access to cultural facilities such as libraries, museums and archives and leisure facilities, including cinemas and theatres, and to ensure that persons with disabilities could not only attend but also actively contribute to cultural and artistic events.

53. **Mr. Barberá de la Torre** (Spain) said that the Government was unreservedly committed to protecting the human rights recognized in Spain's Constitution and, reflecting that commitment, had continued to make substantial contributions to the international protection system despite the fragility of the national economy. The crisis was undoubtedly the main factor currently shaping economic policy and the Government was convinced that austerity was the route to recovery. At the same time, however, it was determined that the most disadvantaged should not bear the brunt of a crisis for which they were not responsible and for that reason the share of the budget allocated to social expenditure had been increased from 63.7 per cent in 2011 to 64.5 per cent in 2012.

54. All working Spaniards were contributing to the recovery through wage reductions and tax increases but, with high risk premiums restricting sovereign debt issuance, it would not be possible to maintain the same level of Government spending. That situation should not, however, imply restrictions on economic, social and cultural rights. On the contrary,

the Government was convinced that maintaining those rights was essential to development and would have a positive impact on long-term growth. The sizeable delegation appearing before the Committee was a reflection of that conviction and the Government's commitment to fulfilling its obligations under the Covenant.

55. The employment situation in Spain had deteriorated not just because of the crisis but also because of significant structural deficiencies. However, following recent reforms aimed at endowing the labour market with the flexibility necessary to recovery while continuing to support the disadvantaged, substantial resources would be allocated to job creation as well as to assistance for the unemployed.

56. The Government was also committed to maintaining the purchasing power of pensions, despite the austerity measures, and had increased pension expenditure in 2012 relative to 2011 for that reason. Expenditure had also been sustained in the areas of health and education, with Spain notably among the top three countries for spending on education for the under-3s.

57. He thanked Committee members for their comments and questions, which would be taken into account in future policy development, and reiterated his Government's commitment to achieving further advances in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.

58. **Ms. Menéndez Pérez** (Spain) said that, although the report under consideration covered the period extending from 2004 to 2009, as was logical the Committee's concerns and questions had focused on more recent times. It was important to be aware in that connection that the members of the delegation had frequently been referring to austerity measures and structural reforms that had been in place no more than months and in some cases no more than weeks. Although it had been impossible for the delegation to comment on the success of measures introduced so recently, its members had endeavoured to provide in-depth, quality information.

59. **The Chairperson** said that the very detailed information that the State party had furnished and its firm commitment to protecting economic, social and cultural rights were greatly appreciated. He trusted that the Government would continue to be guided by its obligations under the Covenant when adopting austerity measures; otherwise those measures might have a negative and disproportionate impact on enjoyment of those rights, especially among minority and disadvantaged groups.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 5.45 p.m.